

Celebrate National Coming Out Day on 10/11 with Pride Alliance

By Deborah Bauer and Theresa Grimaldi

At Brookhaven Lab, we strive every day to create a community that is welcoming for all people to have a sense of belonging with dignity and respect. Accordingly, the Brookhaven Lab Pride Alliance, as well as other resource groups, provides programming throughout the year to highlight how rich and robust our community is. June is Pride Month, a time to celebrate **LGBTQ*** (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, queer/questioning, etc.) culture, history, and people. In addition, Oct. 11 is when we celebrate National Coming Out Day (NCOD) to not only raise awareness about LGBTQ*, or gender and sexual minority (**GSM**), specific concerns, but to encourage LGBTQ* people to live openly and honestly.

It has been shown that LGBTQ* people who are “out” to their immediate families report feeling happier than those who are not (Youth Allies, 2014). Similarly, in a study with school-age children, non-GSM students struggle most with their classes, exams, and work while their LGBTQ* peers say the biggest problem they face is an unaccepting family (Human Rights Campaign, 2014).

On NCOD, LGBTQ* people and their allies show support for **closeted** individuals to disclose their **sexual orientation**, **gender identity**, and/or **gender expression**.

NCOD was started by Robert Eichberg and Jean O’Leary in 1988 on the first anniversary of the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. During this time, gay rights activists experienced a lot of anti-LGBTQ* sentiment, so Eichberg and O’Leary believed they should promote positivity and celebration instead of reacting defensively. They believed that only in the atmosphere of silence and ignorance can a belief like **homophobia** thrive. NCOD’s goal was to give voice to LGBTQ* people to fight that ignorance. Moreover, one out of every two Americans has someone close to them who is gay or lesbian. For transgender people, that number is only one in 10.

Along with many other pivotal moments in LGBTQ* history, NCOD has led to great change in the nation, including the battle against **heteronormative ideology**, the right for same sex marriage (June 26, 2015), and the most recent Supreme Court declaration that federal law protects **LGBT** workers from discrimination (June 15, 2020). We celebrate such milestones since they protect us and our loved ones – partners, families, friends, and colleagues.

Oct. 11 is a day of celebration for those in the LGBTQ* community and their allies that is typically accompanied by wearing rainbow ribbons and pins; however, with COVID-19 restrictions, the Pride Alliance has chosen to celebrate a little differently this year. We want to give you one of our brand-new t-shirts! Just complete an NCOD-themed crossword puzzle and send it to pride@bnl.gov. After NCOD, five random participants will be selected to receive one of these great t-shirts.

Check out the Pride Alliance [website](#) for more information and helpful terminology as well as tips for all employees to show support and respect toward others who have come out in the workplace.

We hope you enjoy the crossword! Happy National Coming Out Day!

BNL Pride Alliance